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LAFAYETTE VISTAS

THE CHANGING FACE OF HOUSING IN LAFAYETTE

RULES CHANGE FOR IN-LAW UNITS

A new state law (AB 1866), became effective July 1, 2003, and is designed to promote second units in residential areas. This new law is one part of the legislature's response to the need for affordable housing, and cities and counties throughout California are grappling with its implications.

The law requires that any application for a second unit must be considered through a ministerial process only, which means that, so long as the proposed unit conforms to certain guidelines, the application will not – and cannot – be reviewed by the Planning Commission.

To prepare for the new law, the Lafayette City Council has undertaken to review and update the City's 2nd Unit Ordinance. The goal is to provide guidelines that protect neighborhoods while simplifying the process for applicants and abiding by the new state laws.

At press time, the new rules had been considered, but not adopted by the City Council. Because this issue is of interest to many, we will post the new 2nd unit guidelines on the City's website as soon as they become effective. Please check **www.lovelafayette.org** for more information on this issue.

People in Lafayette love their homes and neighborhoods. The generous open space, the semi-rural character, and the small town downtown all come together to make Lafayette a very desirable place to live. Given that Lafayette occasionally shows up on the Top 10 list of cities with the highest median-priced homes in California, it is clear that housing is an important, and increasingly expensive, element of Lafayette.

With almost 80% of our City zoned as residential, the majority of our land is used for housing. Consequently, many, if not most of the issues that come before the City Council, or require action by the City staff, are analyzed for their impact on the residential character of Lafayette.

Lafayette, however, does not exist in a vacuum. The state, and the Bay Area in particular, are increasing in population. Furthermore, over the last two decades, the "boomer generation" has aged. Together these changes create a demand for new and different types of housing than have been traditionally provided – especially senior and "affordable" housing. As a result, though our community housing stock remains stable, certain changes are on the horizon as the City strives to accomplish the goals established in our General Plan and meet guidelines and mandates from outside sources. The state Legislature has become very interested in promoting housing, and has recently passed several new laws, with more on the way. Lafayette will need to consider carefully its existing ordinances and, perhaps revise them, in order to comply with the new laws and qualify for grants and funding.

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AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The lack of an adequate housing supply, particularly affordable housing, in the Bay Area is widely recognized. Because it is a regional problem, ABAG (Association of Bay Area Governments) has become the primary force in developing and implementing strategies to improve the supply and affordability of housing. Based on the premise that every Bay Area city must assume its share of anticipated growth. ABAG has assigned Lafayette a specific goal of new 194 housing units that must be provided by 2006 (Moraga's allocation is 214, and Orinda's is 221). These units must serve households with a range of income levels as follows:

Income Category	Percent of Median Income	Annual Income Range	No. of Units	Monthly Cost
Very Low	Less than 50%	Less than $38,300	30	No more than $956
Low	50% - 80%	$38,300 - $61,280	17	$956 - $1,532
Moderate	80% - 120%	$61,280 - $91,920	42	$1,532 - $2,298
Above Moderate	More than 120%	More than $91,920	105	More than $2,298

The Housing Element of our General Plan proposes to meet these targets by 2006. We are accomplishing this goal in a variety of ways, from pursuing state and federal grants, to providing incentives for developers, to using the redevelopment funds earmarked specifically for housing.

The Lafayette Town Center Apartments, with 75 units already built and another 69 proposed, will give Lafayette a great start toward reaching its goal.

Two Multi-Housing Developments in Pipeline

The changing face of Lafayette's housing needs are reflected in two projects that have recently been submitted to the City for approval. The proposed Lafayette Town Center Apartments and the Sunrise Assisted Living Facility would both include units that are "affordable" and, if the projects are approved and completed by 2006, would count towards satisfying Lafayette's affordable housing goals.

Lafayette Town Center

The Lafayette Town Center is a mixed-use downtown project, and its final phase is currently making its way through the approval process. The first phase, completed in 2000, was the retail space along Mt. Diablo Blvd. that includes Baja Fresh, Panda Express, and Hollywood Video. The 75-unit brown-shingled apartment complex was completed in 2001. The final phase will lie behind the Pet Food Express store, next to the south end of BART. Together, these projects help the City meet two important General Plan goals: "encouraging development of residential uses in commercial areas," and "facilitating construction of multi-family units in the downtown area".

If approved as submitted, the final phase will contain 69 apartment units in two connected buildings surrounding a central courtyard. The east side of the development will face the creek and the BART pathway, and will have about 4,000 square feet of service/retail space on the ground floor.

The conceptual design shows four stories built over an underground, 100-space, parking garage. Fourteen of the 69 apartment units would be designated as affordable housing for seniors or tenants with special needs.

Public hearings to review this project will begin later this summer.

Proposed Town Center Phase III

Sunrise Assisted Living Facility

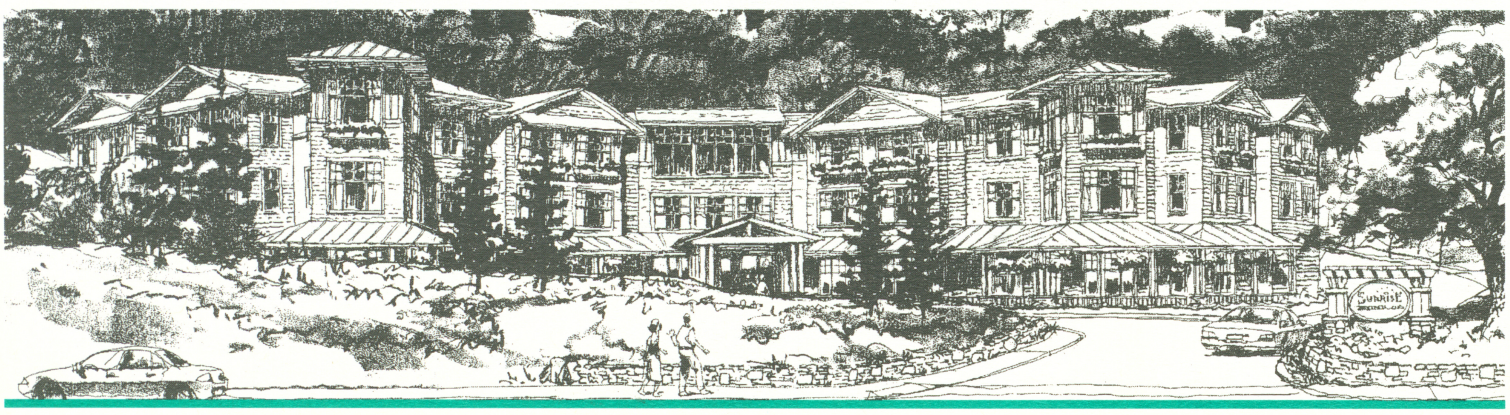
According to the California Association of Realtors, 75% of retirees would prefer to live near their longtime home when they move into retirement housing. To accommodate this desire among Lafayette residents, Sunrise Development Inc. hopes to build an assisted living facility at the west entrance to town.

Sunrise is the operator of 186 retirement facilities nationwide, and the Sunrise project in Lafayette is slated for the 67-acre parcel on the south side of Mt. Diablo Boulevard, across from the Oakwood Athletic Club. To preserve the rural gateway to Lafayette and as much open space as possible, the building would be placed on the western-most 5 acres, leaving the remaining 62 acres as permanently-protected open space.

The proposal consists of a three-story building, with landscaping that would screen the parking from the street. The project would provide 94 units, 35 of which would be available to residents requiring supervised care for Alzheimer's disease or similar conditions. The units would range in size from 312 to 581 square feet, and six of them would be available at below market rates for qualifying low-income persons.

Before any action can be taken on this project, an environmental impact report will be prepared, and the zoning must be changed. Consequently there are many months of work and public review yet to be done for this proposal.

Proposed Sunrise Assisted Living Facility



More Input on Growth

An update on Shaping Our Future

The Gold Rush in the 1850s…the Post War Boom in the 1950s… the Digital Revolution in the 1980s…growth is the story of California and it will continue into this new century. Contra Costa County, which already has nearly 1 million people living within 500,000 acres, is expected to add 75,000-125,000 more households in the next 20 years. Obviously, this kind of growth will have major impacts on our economy, housing, transportation and environment and county leaders need to start planning for it now.

Last year **Shaping Our Future** (SOF) was launched as a county-wide effort to develop a master growth plan for Contra Costa County. Every city in the county was invited, and chose, to participate.

On May 17th, 2003, after a number of public workshops and meetings, **Shaping Our Future** consultants presented a year's worth of work — the Vision Summary and Draft Principles of Agreement — at a joint meeting of all the cities.

Certainly the elements of the vision appear laudable...

- Coordinating local general plans
- Consistent agreement on the Urban Limit Line
- Using SOF as a blueprint for transportation investments
- Protecting open space
- Developing housing plans based on SOF
- Coordinating economic development on a countywide basis
- Developing a county housing trust for affordable projects
- Speaking with one voice to regional, state and federal agencies on growth management issues

...But despite these noble goals, many in Lafayette have urged the City to withdraw its participation in SOF. Specifically, there is concern that SOF will create or empower another layer of regional government. We already have the County, the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), the California Department of Housing and Community Development, and the State Legislature working on growth strategies. Since one of Lafayette's clear missions is to carefully control land use development within the City, the question becomes – should the City also encourage stronger regional planning?

Based on comments made during the May 17th meeting, some other cities also share Lafayette's concern over how SOF will evolve. The City Council will continue to monitor the progress of SOF and ultimately, choose to participate only if it promises clear benefits to Lafayette.

Housing By The Numbers: A Brain-Teaser

1. How many housing units are there currently in Lafayette?
   a) 8,334 b) 9,477 c) 10,266
2. How many additional housing units does Lafayette's General Plan allow before we are "built-out"?
   a) 1,000 b) 2,500 c) 3,000
3. What percentage of our City's households are renters?
   a) 6% b) 16% c) 23%
4. In which of the following decades did Lafayette have the largest population growth (in numbers)?
   a) 1990-2000 b) 1970-1980 c) 1960-1970
5. How many new residents (net) did Lafayette add during the 1990's?
   a) 400 b) 4,000 c)5,400
6. To build a 2,500 square foot house in Lafayette, development fees (planning, utility, building permit, school and other impact fees) will total approximately:
   a) $33,000 b) $12,500 c) $27,000
7. Between 1990 and 2000 did the number of children in Lafayette increase or decrease?
   a) increase b) decrease
8. What percentage of Lafayette's population is 55 or older?
   a) 11% b) 18% c) 26%
9. Is the average household size in Lafayette larger or smaller than the average in the Bay Area?
   a) larger b) smaller
10. For the past 2 decades what has been the average number of new housing units built per year?
    a) 18 b) 33 c) 62
11. What percentage of Lafayette's housing units were constructed before 1960?
    a) 35% b) 40% c) 50%
12. How many people would like to buy a home in Lafayette?
    a) Everyone who has ever visited the City.

Answers:
1-b, 2-a, 3-c, 4-c, 5-a, 6-a, 7-a, 8-c, 9-a, 10-a, 11-c

(continued from page 1...Changing Face of Housing...)

The biggest challenge in Lafayette is balancing our commitment to preserving our existing neighborhoods with the pressures and requirements to provide new housing. To give you some perspective on what that balancing act entails, here's a partial list of goals and requirements for housing in Lafayette. These come from our own General Plan, the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD).

- Encourage the development of diverse housing types for special populations, (i.e. elderly, young families, persons with disabilities) and additional affordable housing units.
- Encourage mixed use and multi-family projects.
- Promote construction of second dwelling units in single-family residential areas.
- Contain new housing within existing urban areas through in-fill and higher densities.
- Direct growth where infrastructure capacity is available (highways, transit, water supplies).
- Discourage long distance automobile commuting.

It is an exhausting list, full of noble, and sometimes conflicting, goals. Finding ways to implement them will be an ongoing effort that will require patience, community involvement, and commitment. Through it all we hope to preserve the unique, small town ambiance and semi-rural nature of Lafayette that our residents treasure.

Historic Snapshots

Part 10: Built to Last

Californians are often thought of as being first in line for anything new, and lacking an appreciation of anything old, but judging by the homes in Lafayette, that is far from true here. Fifty percent of our homes were built prior to 1960, and 392 Lafayette residences were built before 1940! What is even more incredible is that most of them are in very good condition, having been carefully maintained and updated through the years. Lafayette residents love these homes for their unique character and design, as well as their history.

Elam Brown built the first house in Lafayette in 1847 on what is now Lafayette Circle. While that house was torn down in the 1920s, we have two homes still in use today that vie for the title of "Oldest Home":

Although it was built in 1876, the house at 1324 Martino Road is not an elegant Victorian like its city cousins in San Francisco. Rather, it was a working farmhouse built by Fred Easton on 100 acres purchased from Peter Thompson, Lafayette's first blacksmith. Today's owners, who bought the house in the late 1970's and restored it, call it "The Chestnuts" after the beautiful old tree in the garden.

In 1876, this house on Martino Road was built as a working farmhouse on 100 acres.

The Daley House on Moraga Blvd. was originally built as a barn in 1850.

At 3306 Moraga Blvd. is the historic Daley House, which is often cited as the oldest home in Lafayette. According to County records, the Daley structure was originally built as a barn in 1850 and converted to a house in approximately 1860. However, there is evidence that the original structure burned down and was rebuilt in 1914. In any case, this red house, which overlooks the creek near Carol Lane, is certainly part of Lafayette history.

Most of the rest of our older homes can be found east of Pleasant Hill Road, east of Moraga Road and south of Mt. Diablo Blvd. Why not take a driving tour past these wonderful old homes of Lafayette?

Around Town

Sept. 20 – 21 **8TH ANNUAL ART & WINE FESTIVAL** – Arts and crafts booths, food, wine, micro-brewed beer, and live music. Downtown Lafayette. Call the Chamber at 284-7404 for more information.

Oct. 26 **LAFAYETTE RESERVOIR RUN** – Mark your calendars so you don't miss out on Northern California's most scenic fun run! There will be a 10K and 5K run, as well as a 2-mile course for walkers and "the stroller brigade". Registration is $22 advance, $27 day of race and $17 for elementary students. Call the Chamber of Commerce at 284-7404 for more information.

City Directory

For Council Members call: **284-1968**

Council Members

Carol Federighi	**Mayor**
Erling Horn	**Vice Mayor**
Carl Anduri	**Council Member**
Ivor Samson	**Council Member**
Don Tatzin	**Council Member**

Messages to **all** Council Members:
cityhall@lovelafayette.org

Administration

General Reception and	**284-1968**
Steven Falk, City Manager	**Fax: 284-3169**
Tracy Robinson, Admin. Srv. Dir.	**299-3227**
Gonzalo Silva, Financial Srv. Mgr.	**299-3213**
Joanne Robbins, City Clerk	**299-3210**

Community Development

Ann Merideth, Director	**299-3218**
Tony Coe, Engineering Srv. Mgr.	**284-1951**
Niroop Srivatsa, Planning Srv. Mgr.	**284-1976**
Ron Lefler, Public Works Srv. Mgr.	**299-3214**
P.W. Hotline (to report problems)	**299-3259**

If you observe illegal dumping in creeks & storm drains or accidental spills on roads, call Contra Costa Hazardous Materials Division 646-2286.

Lamorinda School Bus Program

Juliet Shanks, Analyst	**299-3216**
	Or 299-3215

Parks and Recreation **284-2232**

Jennifer Russell, Director	
Yvonne Ozorio, Senior Services	**284-5050**
Teen Programs	**284-5815**

Police Services

Emergency: 24 Hours	**911**
Police Dispatch: 24 Hours	**284-5010**
Police Business Office:	**283-3680**

Anonymous Tipline, Traffic Enforcement, Suggestions & LEARN (Laf. Emergency Action Response Network), 299-3232 X 2205

Fax	**284-3169**
Address	**3675 Mt. Diablo Blvd. #210, Lafayette, CA 94549-1968**
Website:	**www.ci.lafayette.ca.us**

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